Beret Writes His Wife

'This . . . Is Too Unbelievable'

Capt. Robert F. Marasco, 27, of Bloomfield, N.J., until yesterday was charged by the Army with shooting a South Vietnamese suspected of being a double agent. Marasco — one of eight Green Berets arrested in the slaying on July 16 — wrote the following letter to his wife on July 24 from his solitary cell at Longbinh Jail outside Saigon:

I don't know exactly how to tell you what I now must. I have never had to write anything as horrendous as this or even ever considered it.

Let me start at the beginning. When I got back here from leave my operation had been compromised and they had just taken one of my people to headquarters under suspicion of being an NVA Agent.

Many of the details I cannot go into because they are classified but suffice to say that we determined his guilt and had to decide what to do with him. My unit commander, Maj. Crew, Operations Officer Cpt. Williams and two CI Officers and myself went through all the channels to include the commander and civilian intelligence agencies.

There were numerous reasons why we could not let him go, so the powers to be decided to do away with him. Being the people involved, it was up to us to come up with a plan and execute it.

We followed through with it thinking that the proper coordination had been made and that this was a military operation. The result: one colonel, two majors, three captains and one warrant officer are presently in jail charged with conspiracy and murder.

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LETTER, From A1

This situation is too unbelievable to comprehend. We felt we were doing something that was approved and was in the best interests of the war and the country. There are things involved here which would have international implications and affect even the peace talks.

For some unknown reason the generals over here are pressing this thing and they think they can make it a classified trial without any publicity. I feel that that would be a loss of my civil rights to a public trial.

I can't believe that this is happening to me. The only thing I have been able to think about is the disgrace this will bring on you and my parents. I feel all alone and helpless.

There are so many facets to this situation but they are classified and therefore I cannot talk or write to anybody about them. I have been able to tell my lawyer but that's all. I cannot fully expain it to you. I can say, however, that I am not a criminal and anything I did was done with the most patriotic and purest of motives with approval of my superiors. It is my feeling that I have been deserted by my Army and my country . . .

Explain all of this to my parents and tell them I need help. Have them contact Mr. Rep. Peters (D-N.J.) to see what he can do and anything else they can think of. This is going to go to the highest level of the government.

It will be necessary for me to get a civilian lawyer if I want to fully protect myself.

I think that this case might interest the American Civil Liberties Union inasmuch as my rights are being suppressed and the civilians involved in this are claiming diplomatic immunity and their testimony is paramount to my defense. They refuse to testify because of this so-called immunity. Public opinion would be extremely aroused by this but the Army wants to stifle this.

. . . Everyone here seems very confident in our outcome but I am slowly losing my confidence . . .

My letters are all read so it is difficult to write. I love you and need you more than ever. Please try to still believe in me and have faith in me. Please ask everyone to pray for me and pray for guidance for the generals who will decide my life.

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Five of the eight Green Berets are shown with a defense lawyer. From left: Maj. David E. Crew, Capt. Leland J. Brumley, Capt. Robert F. Marasco, Col. Robert H. Rheault, Capt. John S. Berry (attorney) and Capt. Budge Williams. Murder charges against all eight were dropped.